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Letter dated 7 December 2004 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In reference to paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 58/15 of 3 December 2003, in which the Assembly welcomed the decision of the State of Qatar to host an international conference to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in November 2004, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the final report of the Doha International Conference for the Family (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 94.

(*Signed*) Jamal Nasser **Al-Bader**
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Annex to the letter dated 7 December 2004 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Report on the Doha International Conference for the Family

Held in conjunction with the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

29 and 30 November 2004, Doha, Qatar

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* For the Doha Declaration, see A/59/592.

INTRODUCTION

In 2004, the United Nations celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the 1994 International Year of the Family. The UN General Assembly welcomed the decision of the State of Qatar to mark this important anniversary.[1] Under the patronage and generosity of the Consort of His Highness the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al-Missned, President of Supreme Council for Family Affairs, the Doha International Conference for the Family convened in Doha, Qatar, on November 29-30, 2004.

The Doha International Conference for the Family explored and analyzed the implications of Article 16(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaims that "the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state." The year-long preparatory process for the Doha International Conference for the Family included governmental events, regional dialogues and hundreds of locally organized civil society discussions. During the final meeting in Doha, representatives from governments, civil society, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, religious groups and academia evaluated the outcomes of the preparatory events, reviewed findings and documentation, and developed their own recommendations. The series of interlocking events concluding in Doha "revitalized public support for reinforcing family programmes as an essential element in creating a just, stable and secure world," as called for by the UN Secretary General in his report on the celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family.[2]

The objectives of the 10th Anniversary celebration of the International Year of the Family include:

a. Increasing knowledge regarding family issues among governments as well as the private sector;
b. Strengthening the capacity of national institutions to formulate, implement and monitor effective family policies;
c. Stimulating efforts to respond to problems affecting (and affected by) the situation of the family;
d. Undertaking reviews and assessments at all levels of the situation and needs of the family, including the identification of specific issues and problems;
e. Enhancing the effectiveness of local, national and regional efforts to carry out specific programs concerning the family, generate new activities and strengthen existing ones; and
f. Improving collaboration among national and international non-governmental organizations supporting the family.[3]

The Doha International Conference for the Family materially advanced these objectives.

[1] General Assembly Resolution A/RES/58/15 (December 15, 2003).
[2] Report of the Secretary General, A/59/176 (July 23, 2004), par. 4.
[3] Id, A/59/176, par. 1.

A. Purpose of the Doha International Conference for the Family

The Doha International Conference for the Family involved all sectors of local, national, and international society in developing, collecting and analyzing the social and scientific evidence necessary to strengthen the "natural and fundamental group unit of society."[4] The family, as noted by the Secretary General, has significant "often untapped potential to contribute to national development and to the achievement of major objectives of every society [including] . . . the eradication of poverty and the creation of just, stable and secure societies."[5]

The Doha International Conference for the Family was designed to tap the social, cultural, economic and political potential of the family. The Conference considered findings, recommendations and conclusions developed at a series of coordinated international events. This evidence collectively demonstrates that the family is not only "the natural and fundamental group unit of society" (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16(3)) but is also the fundamental agent for sustainable development. The purpose of the Doha International Conference for the Family was to reaffirm international norms, and establish proposals for action, that can inform an agenda for cooperative research, discussion, and policy development related to family life for the next decade.

B. Preparatory Events

The conference process featured government meetings in Cotonou, Benin; Baku, Azerbaijan; and Riga, Latvia. The process was enriched by a series of regional dialogues, including:

- The World Congress of Families III, 29-31 March 2004, in Mexico City, Mexico
- The Scandinavian Dialogue, 14-15 May 2004, in Stockholm, Sweden
- The European Dialogue, 23-25 August, 2004, in Geneva, Switzerland
- The Asia Pacific Family Dialogue, October 11-13, 2004, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

In addition, hundreds of civil society meetings were organized by local community groups in over 134 cities around the world.

Declarations, reports, papers, essays, personal statements, findings and proposals for action developed at these events were submitted to the Secretariat of the Doha International Conference for the Family. These materials were collected into two reports supporting the Doha Declaration.

C. Work Products

Reports prepared for the Doha International Conference for the Family include a publication collecting the results of over 200 community meetings, as well as a preliminary volume of scholarship. See *The World Unites to Protect the Family: Reports, Statements and Stories from Community Meetings, Non-Governmental Organizations and Members of Civil Society Working to Protect the Family World-Wide* (distributed in Doha, November 29, 2004) (collecting and summarizing reports of community meetings); *The Family in the Third*

[4] Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 16(3).
[5] Id., A/59/176, par. 4.

Millennium: Selected Scholarship Reported to the Doha International Conference for the Family (distributed in Doha, Qatar, November 29, 2004) (providing an initial look at the voluminous academic work collected during the preparatory process). In addition, a compilation of all papers, statements and materials submitted to the Secretariat was presented in Doha.

The initial draft of the Doha Declaration was prepared by a Drafting Committee appointed by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al-Missned.

I. STRUCTURE OF THE DOHA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE FAMILY

A. Government Sponsorship

Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al-Missned, Consort of the Emir of Qatar and President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, provided the vision for the Doha International Conference for the Family. Her Highness established an Organizing Committee, chaired by His Excellency Abdulla bin Nasser Al-Khalifa, Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs.

Numerous other ministries, departments and divisions of the State of Qatar assisted the efforts of the Organizing Committee, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, working through the Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations.

In addition to the State of Qatar, numerous other governmental entities at local, regional, national and international levels, including Members of the United Nations and the UN Secretariat, participated in the preparatory process for the Doha International Conference for the Family.

B. NGO Involvement

A large number of non-governmental organizations, groups, associations and members of civil society assisted with preparatory events for the Doha International Conference for the Family. An NGO Working Committee coordinated a network of preliminary discussions, conferences and dialogues. The NGO Working Committee included representatives from CARE, Catholic Family and Human Rights Foundation, the Family Research Council, and the World Family Policy Center, Brigham Young University.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE PREPARATORY PROCESS FOR THE DOHA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE FAMILY

On July 23, 2004, the Secretary General of the United Nations issued a report on the observance of the International Year of the Family. The report emphasized that "one of the major objectives" of the 2004 International Year of the Family was "to revitalize public attention . . . toward the family and to renew support for family policies and programmes."[6] The Doha International Conference for the Family

[6] Id., A/59/176, par. 32.

reinvigorated public attention toward the family as an essential component in the creation of "just, stable and secure societies."[7]

A series of government events, regional dialogues and community meetings were facilitated by the Conference. These activities promoted open discussions among policymakers, government representatives, academicians, and interested citizens in communities around the globe.

A. Governmental Events

The Doha process involved significant governmental events in Benin, Azerbaijan and Latvia.

Cotonou, Benin: The government of Benin sponsored an intergovernmental conference addressing family life in Africa. The Regional Conference on the Family in Africa was convened in Cotonou, Benin, from 27-28 July 2004. At that conference, ministerial and local governmental leaders met with members of civil society to discuss implementation of the Plan of Action for the Family in Africa.

Baku, Azerbaijan: The government of Azerbaijan held a National Conference on the Socio-Demographic and Gender Aspects of the Family on October 14, 2004. The conference focused the attention of the scientific community on family problems and possible solutions. A report of the event was submitted to the Secretariat of the Doha Conference.

Riga, Latvia: The government of Latvia conducted an expert group meeting on the needs of family and children. The meeting, held in October 2004, addressed Latvia's efforts to promote stable family life and promote equality for women. A report of the event was submitted to the Doha Secretariat.

B. Regional Dialogues

The NGO Working Committee supported the Organizing Committee with four regional dialogues preparatory to the final session of the Doha International Conference for the Family:

Mexico City: The World Congress of Families III convened in Mexico City on 29-31 March 2004. This event attracted participants from more than 15 countries in Latin America for a three-day discussion of effective family policy. Hundreds of papers were presented by political leaders, non-governmental organizations, academicians, and representatives of diverse faith communities. The Congress ended with the adoption of the Mexico City Declaration (to be published in the forthcoming edition of *The Family in the Third Millennium*).

Stockholm: A second dialogue was held in Stockholm, Sweden, on 14-15 May 2004. The event was hosted by members of the Swedish Parliament. Participants addressed questions of family structure, refugees, family integration and migration, and policies necessary to support working parents and single-parent families.

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[7] Id., A/59/176, par. 4.

Geneva: A three-day academic panel convened in Geneva, Switzerland, 23-25 August, 2004. Twenty-two scholars from Spain, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Canada, the Czech Republic, Sweden and the United States presented research addressing family, marriage, human dignity, parents and children, and social, religious and cultural values.

Kuala Lumpur: The dialogue process concluded with the Asia Pacific Family Dialogue Towards the Doha International Conference for the Family. The event, hosted by the National Population and Family Development Board of the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, presented approximately 75 academic, governmental, and community reports from more than 20 nations throughout Asia and the world. The event concluded with the adoption of the Kuala Lumpur Declaration (to be published in the forthcoming edition of *The Family in the Third Millennium*).

C. Civil Society Meetings

To involve global civil society in the 10th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, the NGO Working Committee helped organize hundreds of community meetings. A total of 204 meetings were held in 34 countries. Reports, statements, declarations and findings from these meetings are compiled into the report, *The World Unites to Protect the Family.*

III. FINDINGS AND WORK PRODUCTS

The Doha International Conference for the Family increased international understanding of the family across all regions of the globe. The Conference closely examined and analyzed the determination of the international community set forth in Section 16(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that the "family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state." The findings and work products of the Conference explore the meaning of this long-standing international consensus:

a. **The World Unites to Protect the Family:** This report collects declarations, statements, stories and findings from hundreds of civil society meetings around the world.

b. **The Family in the Third Millennium:** At the beginning of 2004, the NGO Working Group circulated a world-wide call for papers. The working group received over 140 abstracts from scholars and researchers around the world. Selected scholars were invited to present completed papers at the regional dialogues. *The Family in the Third Millennium* is an initial selection from this scholarship. Final academic volumes will be published in early 2005.

c. **Compiled and Indexed Materials Submitted to the Conference Secretariat:** Thousands of pages of reports, statements, papers and other materials were submitted throughout 2004 to the NGO Working Committee. An indexed compilation of these materials was available for inspection and review in Doha.

d. **The Doha Declaration:** The Doha Declaration, adopted at the conclusion of the conference, reaffirms international commitments to family; marriage; human dignity; parents and children; and cultural, religious and social values. The Doha Declaration also calls upon the international community to take appropriate local, regional and international action to support and implement these commitments.

IV. PROCEEDINGS OF THE FINAL SESSION OF THE DOHA INTERNATIONAL CONFERNCE FOR THE FAMILY

The Doha International Conference for the Family brought together a pluralistic range of stake holders, representing diverse cultures, political systems and faiths. In Doha, these stake holders were united by the common understanding that, by protecting "the natural and fundamental group unit of society,"[8] communities, nations, regions and the world will not only encourage sustainable development, but further the intercultural understanding that is the necessary foundation for a stable, secure and just world for our children and grandchildren.

Delegates to the 29-30 November 2004 concluding session of the Doha International Conference for the Family reached across traditional national, political, and other boundaries to unite in common support of the family. Participants included representatives from governments, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, diverse religious communities, members of civil society, and distinguished academicians and researchers. These participants engaged in two days of high-level discussions with leading international experts who addressed a wide range of topics central to modern family life. The Conference also adopted the Doha Declaration.

From the recommendations made by policy experts to the views expressed by government representatives and members of civil society, the Doha Conference was a transparent, broad-based event. The Conference produced valuable work products – culminating in the Doha Declaration – that provide a helpful foundation for future research, policy discussions and constructive action for the next decade.

A. Plenary and Topical Sessions of the Conference

Plenary Session: The Doha International Conference for the Family began with a Plenary Address by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al-Missned, Consort of His Highness the Emir of Qatar and President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, State of Qatar. Her Highness welcomed delegates to the Conference and acknowledged the important role of the 10th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family in focusing world attention on the family. Her Highness noted that healthy family life is a central component of sustainable social and economic development. She also emphasized that the people of the world share common views and understandings related to the meaning and importance of the family. She stressed the importance of taking action to strengthen the family at the beginning of the new millennium. In light of the State of Qatar's continuing commitment to the family, and to implement the first Call for Action set forth in the Doha Declaration, Her Highness announced that the State of Qatar would establish an international Institute for Study of the Family.

[8] Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 16(3).

The plenary session of the Conference also included remarks from Ambassador Ibrahim Gambari, United Nations Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Special Advisor on Africa. A representative of the NGO Working Committee also addressed the session.

Topical Sessions: The Doha International Conference for the Family thereafter divided into sessions addressing four major topics:

- The Family in the Third Millennium: Challenges and Consequences
- The Legal and Religious Foundations for the Family in the Third Millennium
- The Family and Education
- The Family and Social Dialogue

Under these major headings, distinguished presenters examined such themes as:

- The family and globalization
- The family and development
- Promoting marital and social stability
- The positive impact of marriage on men, women and children
- Education and the challenge of modernism
- Education and the elderly
- The family as the foundation for social dialogue
- The role and problems of the media in the modern family
- The complementarity of men and women
- The inter-generational transmission of values through the extended family

The extensive scholarship and practical experience shared during these presentations will be published in the forthcoming, complete edition of *The Family in the Third Millennium.*

B. Negotiation of the Doha Declaration

The Doha Declaration was negotiated on 29-30 November 2004 by a distinguished Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, composed of representatives from national governments around the world. The International Negotiating Committee was chaired by His Excellency Abdulla Eid Al-Sulaiti, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations.

The first draft of the declaration was prepared by a Drafting Committee chaired by Dr. Abdul Jalil Lahmanate, Special Advisor to Her Highness. This draft was presented to all Conference participants at the conclusion of the plenary session on 29 November 2004. Non-government participants were invited to submit written comments to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee by 6:00 p.m. on November 29.

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee began discussions at the conclusion of the plenary session. These deliberations commenced on the afternoon of 29 November and extended into the early morning hours of 30 November 2004. At a productive session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on 30 November, the language of the Doha Declaration was finalized. The Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee expressed his profound gratitude to members of the committee for their productive contributions. Members of the committee expressed their appreciation for the balanced text of the Doha Declaration. Committee members also thanked Her Highness and the State of Qatar for convening the Doha International Conference for the Family.

The Doha Declaration reaffirms commitments of the international community contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, and other UN documents. The initial paragraphs of the Doha Declaration list the purposes of the 10th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family and briefly review the preparatory process of the Conference. The operative paragraphs reaffirm international commitments to the family and call for appropriate actions to implement those commitments.

C. Final Session and Adoption of the Doha Declaration

The text of the Doha Declaration approved by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee was presented at the final session of the Conference. Her Highness Shiekha Moza bint Nasser Al-Missned attended this final session.

The session began with a summary of the proceedings of the Doha International Conference for the Family, presented by His Excellency Abdullah Nasser M. Al-Khalifa, Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, State of Qatar. The final text of the Doha Declaration was then presented to the Conference by Sheikha Hessa bint Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani, Vice President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. Upon the recommendation of the Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, Sheikha Hessa requested government representatives at the Conference to adopt the Doha Declaration by acclamation. Following this action by government representatives, all participants in the Conference were invited to demonstrate their support for the document. Representatives from the national parliaments of Sweden, Lativa and New Zealand thereafter made statements welcoming, supporting and endorsing the Doha Declaration. Her Highness then delivered the concluding remarks of the Conference, reiterating the State of Qatar's commitment to the outcomes of the Doha International Conference for the Family, as well as the international center for study of the family.

D. Commitments for Action

The Doha International Conference for the Family has encouraged a broad range of partners to consider how best to provide the family with the "protection by society and the state" that is assured by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[9] The Conference has energized government representatives,

[9] Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16(3); see also Report of the Secretary General, A/59/176 (July 23, 2004), par. 4 (noting that the contributions of the family to society have generally been overlooked).

non-governmental organizations, faith groups and members of civil society to take action to realize the promise of the Universal Declaration.

Government: Government representatives were presented with a wealth of information, including the views of civil society and findings of academicians from around the world that will inform and enrich future negotiations involving family and family life. The Doha International Conference for the Family recommends that governments give appro-priate consideration to this data – and in particular the Doha Declaration – in future discussions related to the family.

NGOs: The network of non-governmental organizations, religious leaders, academicians and members of civil society represented at the Conference has been give a new and positive focus for future cooperative efforts. The Doha International Conference for the Family recommends that this network consider Conference work products – including the collected academic materials and the Doha Declaration – as a basis for further research, analysis, policy development and organizational activities.

The State of Qatar: The first Call for Action in the Doha Declaration urges development of "programs and policies designed to stimulate and encourage discussion between nations, religions, cultures and civilizations on questions related to marriage and family life."[10] Consistent with its commitment to the objectives of the 10th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, the State of Qatar will take concrete steps to meet the objectives of this First Call for Action. Her Highness Sheikha Moza announced that, acting through the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and other appropriate agencies, the State of Qatar will establish an international Institute for Study of the Family. The work of the Institute will be coordinated with appropriate governmental and other entities dedicated to researching, supporting and implementing the Doha Declaration.

[10] Doha Declaration, Call for Action, par. 1. See also the Report of the Secretary General, noting that "continuing in-depth research on the family, its functions, relationships and dynamics" is vital to guide "policy adjustments or new policy development." A/59/176, par. 39, 40.